

STAFF REPORT: 7-24-2019 MEETING  
APPLICATION NUMBER: 19-6237  
ADDRESS: 332 WATSON  
HISTORIC DISTRICT: BRUSH PARK  
APPLICANT: MODDIE TURAY  
DATE OF STAFF VISIT: 5-28-2019

PREPARED BY: J. ROSS

## PROPOSAL

The parcel that is located at 332 Watson is an empty lot that is located at the northeast corner of the intersection of Watson and Brush Street, at the northwest corner. A three-story, ca. 1875 brick home is located at 311 Watson, directly to the west of the project area, while a ca. 1910, 2 1/2-story brick home is located at 312 Watson across the street/to the south of the parcel. Empty lots are to the east and north of 332 Watson.

With the current proposal, the applicant is seeking the Commission's approval to erect a new 6-unit building within the project area. Specifically, the building shall be erected as per the **submitted proposal** and the following description:

The new building houses three stories, rises 42'-7" in height, and will display a rectangular 146'-9 1/2" x 56'-7 1/2" footprint. Despite the parcel's address, the building's primary elevation faces on to Brush Street. As per the submitted site plan, the building's side/south and front/east elevation will push towards the limits of the lot line. A 3'-0"-wide landscape strip will serve as a buffer between these elevations and the sidewalk. A low brick wall to the west/rear of the building encloses a brick paver driveway that is accessed via the alley. Exterior walls will display red brick cladding with composite wood and fiber cement panels detailing. The roof is flat and will be topped with flat roof penthouses that will open upon rooftop patios/decks. Single wood doors at the front/east elevation will provide primary access to the building interior space, while overhead metal garage doors are at the rear/west elevation. Windows are fixed and operable aluminum units.

## STAFF OBSERVATIONS

Please see the **attached**, which outlines the manner in the applicant feels that the proposed design conforms to the district's Elements of Design and reflects the character of nearby extant historic-age buildings. It is staff's opinion that the proposed design generally conforms to the district's historic character in regard to materiality, height, scale and massing. However, a review of the submitted application's site plan revealed that the proposed new building's setback will not be consistent with the that of the existing historic homes on Watson Street. Specifically, the new building will display a 3'-0" setback on Watson, while the existing historic-age homes on the 300 block of Watson generally sit back approximately 20'-0" from the sidewalk. It is noted that the building does face on to Brush Street, despite the lot's current Watson Street legal address. A review of the below Sanborn Maps and aerial which date from 1915, 1921, and ca. 1950 indicate that properties that face on the north/south streets generally did display minimal setbacks. Finally, a review of the below 2019 aerial map indicates that the proposed setback for the new building will be consistent with buildings that face on the district's north/south streets.



Project parcel, **1915** (Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps)

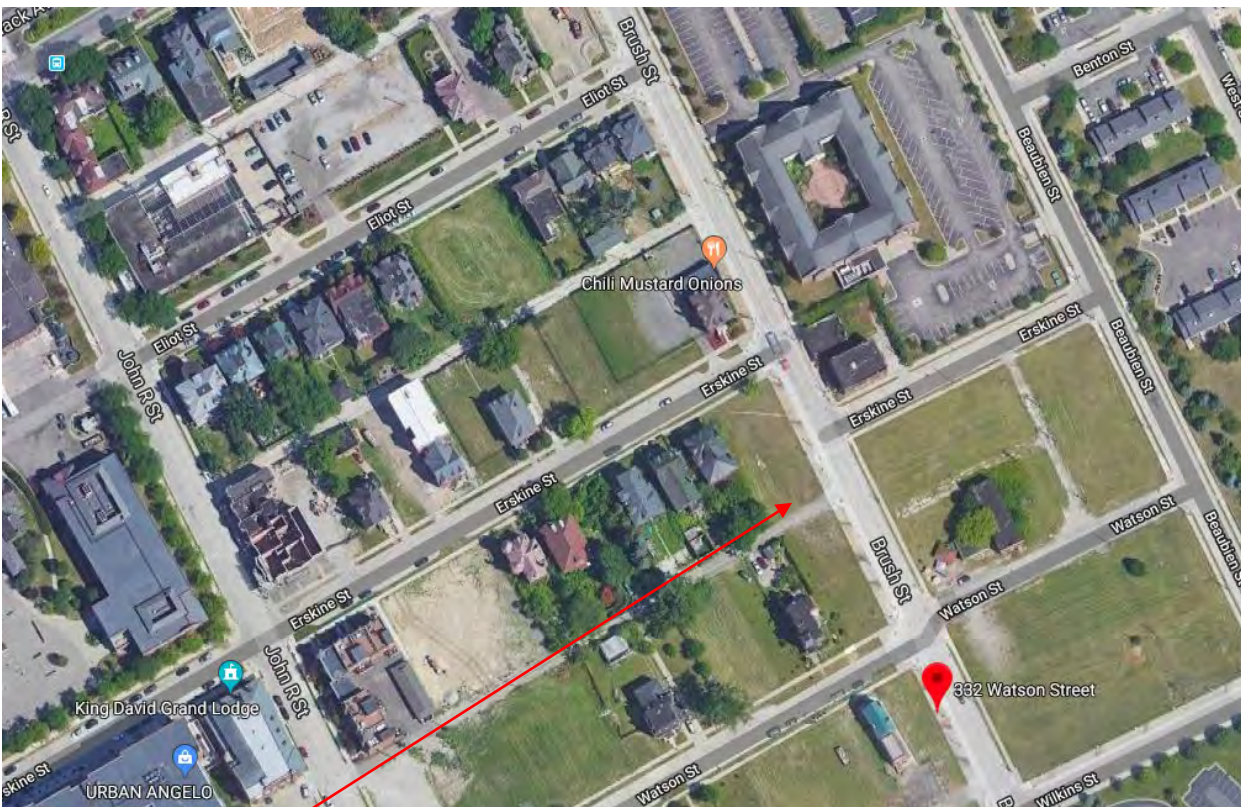


Project parcel, **1921** (Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps)





Project parcel, ca. 1950s



Project parcel, 2019

#### APPLICABLE ELEMENTS OF DESIGN

- (1) *Height.* Height varies in the district from one (1) to eleven (11) stories. In the area between Woodward and Brush, the original development was almost exclusively two and one-half (2 1/2) story houses. Later changes included the construction of apartment



buildings among the houses, the majority of which are three (3) stories in height. The tallest building, the former Detroit Hotel, is located on Woodward Avenue in the commercial strip. All other buildings more than four (4) stories in height are located between Woodward and John R., and generally on or immediately adjacent to buildings on those streets. East of Brush, the original development ranged from one (1) to two and one-half (2 1/2) stories. Later redevelopment includes apartment buildings not more than four (4) stories tall, most often located on Brush. In the case of the nineteenth century houses located between Woodward and Brush, the two and one-half (2 1/2) story height implies more height in feet than usual, since ceiling heights in these houses are unusually high.

- (2) *Proportion of building's front facade.* Buildings in the district are usually taller than wide; horizontal proportions exist only in incompatible later buildings, except for row house buildings.
- (3) *Proportion of openings within the facade.* Areas of void generally constitute between fifteen (15) percent and thirty-five (35) percent of the total facade area, excluding roof. Proportions of the openings themselves are generally taller than wide; in some cases, vertically proportioned units are combined to fill an opening wider than tall.
- (4) *Rhythm of solids to voids in front facade.* Victorian structures in the district often display great freedom in the placement of openings in the facades, although older examples are generally more regular in such placement than later examples. In later apartments, openings tend to be very regular.
- (5) *Rhythm of spacing of buildings on streets.* The area between Woodward and Brush appears to have been developed in a very regular spacing, with fifty (50) foot lots. This regularity has been disrupted by the demolition of many of the houses, and the vacant land resulting, as well as the occasional combination of lots for larger structures, particularly close to Woodward. East of Brush, smaller lots were used in subdividing, but many buildings stand on more land than one lot, and the parcel sizes are now quite irregular, as is the placement of buildings.
- (6) *Rhythm of entrance and/or porch projections.* Most buildings have or had a porch or entrance projection. The variety inherent in Victorian design precludes the establishment of any absolute rhythm, but such projections were often centered. On Woodward, the commercial nature of most buildings and the widening of Woodward has effectively eliminated such projections.
- (7) *Relationship of materials.* By far the most prevalent material in the district is common brick; other forms of brick, stone and wood trim are common; wood is used as a structural material only east of Brush. Some later buildings have stucco wall surfaces. Originally, roofs were wood or slate with an occasional example of tile; asphalt replacement roofs are common.

- (8) *Relationship of textures.* The most common relationship of textures in the district is the low-relief pattern of mortar joints in brick contrasted to the smoother or rougher surfaces of stone or wood trim. Slate, wood, or tile roofs contribute particular textural values where they exist, especially in the case of slates or shingles of other than rectangular shape.
- (9) *Relationship of colors.* Brick red predominates, both in the form of natural color brick and in the form of painted brick. Other natural brick and stone colors are also present. These relate to painted woodwork in various colors, and there is an occasional example of stained woodwork. Roofs of other than asphalt are in natural colors; older slate roofs are often laid in patterns with various colors of slate. Original color schemes for any given building may be determined by professional analysis of the paint layers on the building, and when so determined are always appropriate for that building.
- (10) *Relationship of architectural detail.* On the buildings of the Victorian period, elaborate detail in wood, stone, or sheet metal was common; areas treated include porches, window and door surrounds, cornices, dormers, and other areas. Later buildings are generally simpler, but include less elaborate detail in similar areas.
- (11) *Relationship of roof shapes.* Examples of many roof shapes, including pitched gable roofs, hip roofs, mansard roofs, and gambrel roofs are present. Different types are sometimes combined in a single structure, and tower roofs, cupolas, lanterns, belvideres, monitors, conical roofs are used on various Victorian houses. Flat roof areas in the center of hip or mansard roofs are frequent. Later apartment and commercial buildings generally have flat roofs not visible from the ground. The generally tall roofs add height to the houses of the Victorian period.
- (12) *Walls of continuity.* Between Woodward and Brush, the houses originally honored common setbacks which provided for front lawns. Some of the later apartments have not been set back to the same line as the houses amongst which they were built, thus disturbing the original line of continuity. On Woodward, the commercial development is typically at the sidewalk, creating a wall of continuity; this is not entirely continuous due to parking lots and some buildings set well back. On John R. and Brush, and east of Brush, buildings are typically placed at or near the sidewalk with little or no front yard. Where buildings are continuous, a wall of continuity is created.
- (13) *Relationship of significant landscape features and surface treatments.* The major landscape feature of the district is the vacant land, which creates a feeling that buildings are missing in the district. Some houses have more than the standard fifty (50) foot lot, and have wide side yards. Individual houses have front lawns often subdivided by walks leading to the entrance; lawns are exceedingly shallow or non-existent in the area between Beaubien and Brush. Side drives are rare, access to garages or coach houses being from the alleys. The closing of Watson and Edmund Place between John R. and Brush has created landscaped malls uncharacteristic to the district. Some walks of stone slabs have survived; others have been replaced in concrete. Sidewalks are characteristically close to the curb.

- (14) *Relationship of open space to structures.* There is a large quantity of open space in the area, due to demolition of buildings. The character of this open space is haphazard as it relates to buildings, and indicates the unplanned nature of demolitions due to decline. The feeling created is that buildings are missing and should be present. On Watson and Edmund between John R. and Brush, the streets have been removed and replaced with landscaped malls. The traditional relationship of houses to street has thus become a relationship between houses and landscaped strip open space.
- (15) *Scale of facades and facade elements.* In the large houses between John R. and Brush, the scale tends to be large, and the facade elements scaled and disposed to emphasize the large size of the houses. Towers, setbacks, porches and the like divide facades into large elements. On Woodward, the scale ranges from very large, and emphasized by many small window openings, as in the former Detroiter Hotel, and very large, made up of large architectonic elements, such as the churches, down to quite small, with large windows emphasizing the small size, as in some commercial fronts. East of Brush, the scale is smaller and the detail less elaborate, creating a more intimate setting with the buildings closer to the street. Later apartments are large in scale with simple but large elements near the ground and repetitive window openings above, frequently capped by a substantial cornice.
- (16) *Directional expression of front facades.* A substantial majority of the buildings in the district have front facades vertically expressed. Exceptions are some commercial buildings on Woodward, row houses on John R. or Brush, and some duplexes or row houses east of Brush.
- (17) *Rhythm of building setbacks.* Buildings on the north-south streets generally have little or no setback, while older houses on the east-west streets between Woodward and Brush have some setback, which varies from street to street, though generally consistent in any one block. Later apartments and commercial structures in that area often ignore the previously established setback. Between Brush and Beaubien, setback is generally very limited, only a few feet, if any, lawn space being provided between sidewalk and building.
- (18) *Relationship of lot coverage.* Older single family houses between Woodward and Brush generally occupy about twenty-five (25) to thirty (30) percent of the building lot, not including coach houses or garages. Later apartments and commercial buildings often fill a much higher percentage of the lot, sometimes approaching or reaching complete lot coverage. Between Brush and Beaubien, lot coverage for residential structures is generally about forty (40) percent, with commercial and later apartment buildings again occupying larger percentage of their lots.
- (19) *Degree of complexity with the facades.* The older houses in the district are generally characterized by a high degree of complexity within the facades, with bay windows, towers, porches, window and door hoods, elaborate cornices, and other devices used to decorate the buildings. Newer houses in the northern end of the district and older houses in the southern end tend to be somewhat simpler than high Victorian structures between



them; later apartments and commercial buildings tend to more classical decorative elements of a simpler kind.

- (20) *Orientation, vistas, overviews.* Houses are generally oriented to the east-west streets, while apartments and commercial structures are more often oriented to the north-south streets. The construction of the Fisher Freeway has created an artificial public view of the rear yards on Winder between Woodward and Brush. The vacant land in the area, largely the result of demolition, creates long-distance views and views of individual buildings from unusual angles which are foreign to the character of the neighborhood as an intensely developed urban area. Garages and coach houses are located in the rear of residential properties, and are generally oriented to the alley.
- (21) *Symmetric or asymmetric appearance.* In the Victorian structures, examples of both symmetric and asymmetric design occur; symmetry is more characteristic of the earlier houses, while the high Victorian examples are more likely to assemble elements in a romantic, asymmetric composition. Later houses to the north are more often symmetrical, especially when derived from classical precedent. Asymmetrical but balanced compositions are common. Later apartments are generally symmetrical.
- (22) *General environmental character.* The environmental character is of an old urban neighborhood which has undergone, and is undergoing, considerable change. The original development, reflected in the Victorian period houses, has been altered by the provision of more intensive residential development in the early twentieth century, the change in character of Woodward from residential to commercial at about the same time.

## RECOMMENDATION

It is staff's opinion that the proposed work is generally in keeping with the district's historic character. Staff therefore, recommends that the Commission issue a Certificate of Appropriateness (COA) for the proposed project because it meets the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation, Standard number 2). The historic character of a property shall be retained and preserved. The removal of historic materials or alteration of features and spaces that characterize a property shall be avoided and 9). *New additions, exterior alterations or related new construction will not destroy historic materials, features and spatial relationships that characterize the property. The new work will be differentiated from the old and will be compatible with the historic materials, features, size, scale and proportion, and massing to protect the integrity of the property and its environment.*

However, staff recommends that the above-referenced COA be issued with the following conditions:

- HDC staff shall be afforded the opportunity to review and approve the final construction drawings and for the project prior to the issuance of the permit
- HDC staff shall be afforded the opportunity to review and approve any minor revisions to the approved plan. If staff determines that proposed revision does not conform to the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation and/or the Elements of Design, they shall forward the application to the Commission for review at a monthly meeting.

CPC DESIGN APPROVAL PACKET  
11.15.2018

PROJECT:  
BRUSH 8 TOWNHOMES  
BRUSH STREET  
DETROIT, MI 48201

DEVELOPER:  
CITY GROWTH PARTNERS  
607 SHELBY STREET  
SUITE 450  
DETROIT, MI 48226

ARCHITECT:  
DEP  
6411 ORCHARD AVENUE  
SUITE 110  
TAKOMA PARK, MD 20912

CIVIL/LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT  
GIFFELS WEBSTER  
28W ADAMS STREET  
SUITE 1200  
DETROIT, MI 48226



DRAWING LIST:

1	COVER	14	BUILDING ELEVATIONS
2	PROJECT NARRATIVE	15	BUILDING ELEVATIONS
3	DETROIT CONTEXT MAP	16	ENLARGED ELEVATIONS AND MATERIALS
4	BRUSH CONTEXT MAP	17	ENLARGED ELEVATIONS AND MATERIALS
5	IMMEDIATE SITE PLAN	18	TYPICAL BUILDING SECTION
6	SITE PHOTOS	19	GROUND FLOOR PLAN
7	SITE PHOTOS	20	SECOND FLOOR PLAN
8	SITE PHOTOS	21	THIRD FLOOR PLAN
9	SITE PHOTOS WITH HISTORIC CONTEXT	22	PENTHOUSE FLOOR PLAN
10	MASSING & URBAN PLANNING CONCEPT		
11	BIRDS EYE RENDERING		
12	ARCHITECTURAL SITE PLAN		
13	HISTORIC REFERENCES & ELEMENTS OF DESIGN		

1.

Height

The proposed Brush 8 Townhomes are 3 stories tall, consistent with many of the neighboring historic 2.5 and 3 story single-detached homes: 311 and 312 Watson Street, 3402 Brush Street, and 323 Erskine Street.
2.

Proportion of Building Front Facade

The proposed facade proportion reflects the proportions of the neighboring historic structures, specifically 311 Watson and 3402 Brush Street. These historic structures are vertically expressive in massing and in architectural articulation, with inherent proportions (width to height ratios) of approximately 1:6 and 1:3. These two ratios are the proportion guide for the construct of the Brush 8 facade composition.
3.

Proportion of the openings within facade

The proportions of the facade openings are vertically expressed in approximate width to height ratios of 1:6 and 1:3. The glass opening area (windows and entries) constitute 37% of the total facade area, which is consistent with the surrounding context.
4.

Rhythm of solid to voids of the facade

The placement of the window openings on the front facade is regular and consistent from townhome to townhome. The placement of the window openings on the side facades, however, are less regular and uniform. This is common with many of the Victorian structures in the Brush Park District.
5.

Rhythm of spacing of buildings on street

The rhythm of spacing of the townhomes is intended to reflect the appeal of the mid 1900s Brush Park residential street: its building scale, front yard and side yard articulation. A similar rhythm is created by amassing every two townhomes together to be comparable in width to the historic single homes and by setting back every third townhome to mimic the width of a side yard. A 3' landscaped front yard and side yard are provided along Brush and Watson Streets to provide privacy from the public sidewalk.
6.

Rhythm of entrance and/or porch projections

The entrances of the townhomes are raised two steps above the street level and recessed from the main building massing, creating a consistent rhythm of entry/porch along the 3100 block of Brush Street.
7.

Relationship of materials

The predominant materials are brick, mortar and glass. Architectural accent elements, such as spandrel panels between floors, are dark in color and flat in tone. The proposed material palette is believed to be compatible with the historic homes of Brush Park.
8.

Relationship of textures

The texture composition of Brush 8 is defined by the materials of brick, fiber cement and glass. The coarse and glistening iron-spot brick is juxtaposed by the refined and taut window system and contrasted by the smooth fiber cement spandrel panel. The brick and mortar relief of the masonry wall is further contrasted by the simple articulation of the window glass and fiber cement spandrel panels. At the sidewalk level, textured composite wood panels highlight the townhome entrances, evoking a warm and receptive gesture.
9.

Relationship of colors

The colors of Brush 8 are brick brown with a darker color and tone for trims. A low-key color palette is consistent with the district's historic fabric and allows for a greater appreciation and focus on the design scale, proportion and massing composition.
10.

Relationship of architectural details

The goal of the design of the Brush 8 Townhomes is not to create a literal architectural interpretation of the existing historic homes, but to create a design that speaks to the essential elements which define the style and architectural vocabulary of the Victorian era. Free from the ornate details and elaborate trims, the proposed design uses clean lines, simple massing, and modern materials that compliment and pay homage to the site's history, and yet are relevant to today's time.
11.

Relationship of roof shapes

The townhomes are designed with a flat roof line. The flat tops are given a decent height and are capped in either a double soldier coursing or spandrel panel. This creates a visually strong building top that is reminiscent of the corniced flat roof historic homes, specifically 3402 Brush Street. Penthouses are set well back from the building edges so to not minimize the prominence of the main building massing.

12.

Walls of continuity

Currently there are no adjacent existing construction on Brush Street on either side of the Brush 8 property. A block north of Brush 8 and on the same side of the street, the Brush Street building walls vary from one to three stories, with zero to perhaps three to six-foot setback from the right of way. The Brush 8 Townhomes continue with this street articulation: a 3-story wall and 3’ and 6’ building setbacks. Furthermore, the townhomes are amassed together in such a way that creates a street wall rhythm that is reminiscent of the 1950’s Brush Park residential street wall.
13.

Relationship of landscape features and surface treatments

The proposed Brush 8 Townhomes are elevated two steps above the public sidewalk and separated by 3’ deep planter walls along Brush and Watson Streets. Tall sculptural grass and brushes inhabit the planters, providing further separation and creating a buffer between the public and private realms. An ornate masonry wall/fence along Watson Street screens off the rear of the townhomes. A landscaped fence running along the western property line helps to identify the two neighboring properties. Pervious pavers with low green growth cover the property’s rear driveway.
14.

Relationship of open space to structures

See elements 5 and 18.
15.

Scale of facade and facade elements

The scale of the townhome facades strives to be consistent with the scale of Brush Park District. The building front facade is relatively larger in scale and more elaborate than those of the side facades. The expression of front facade prominence is achieved by the enlarged window sizes and the embellishment of the entrance. Horizontal bands of fiber cement spandrel panels and masonry soldier coursing demarcate the floor line to help control the scale of the 3-story tall structures. Penthouses are setback from the building edges to ensure a 3-story scale rather than a 4-story scale.
16.

Directional expression of front facades

The front facades are expressed vertically to be consistent with most of the existing historic structures.
17.

Rhythm of building setback

See elements 5 and 12.
18.

Relationship of lot coverage

The lot coverage for Brush 8 is approximately 60%. This is consistent with some of the more recent multi-family construction.
19.

Degree of complexity with the facades

See element 10.
20.

Orientation, vistas, overviews

The primary view of the development is located along Brush Street with perhaps the most important view of the project at the corner of Brush and Watson Streets. The side facade of this end unit is articulated so that there is no drop off in the level of architectural composition or material. The side facade of the unit located along the public alley is also articulated in a similar manner. Garages are located at the rear of the townhomes. They are screened off by landscaping and low masonry/wood walls (TBD) located along Watson Street and the western property line.
21.

Symmetrical or asymmetrical appearance

The facades are designed to be asymmetrical yet balanced compositions. The asymmetrical but balanced composition is in keeping with many of the later period Victorian structures.
22.

General environmental character

The design goal of Brush 8 is to create a series of townhomes that not only reflect the spirit and character of the historic Brush Park District but is also of an added value to the District, and is relevant to today’s time in technology, material, sensibility and use. The massing and the urban planning of Brush 8 reminisces the visual appeal, scale, and pedestrian experience of the 1950’s Brush Park. The simplicity of the facade composition echoes the essential nature of the Victorian style homes.





LEGEND:

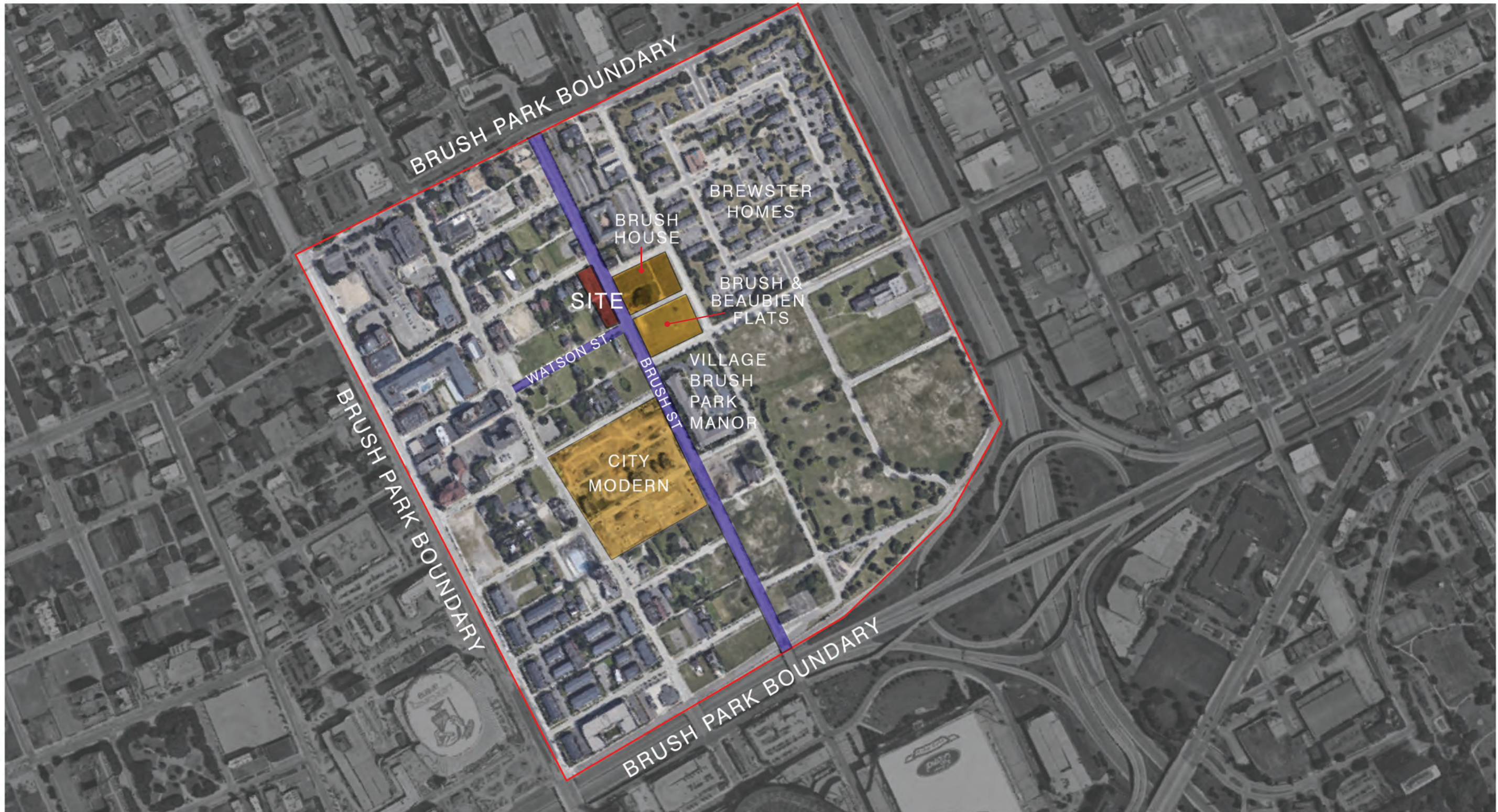


BRUSH PARK BOUNDARY

BRUSH PARK BOUNDARY





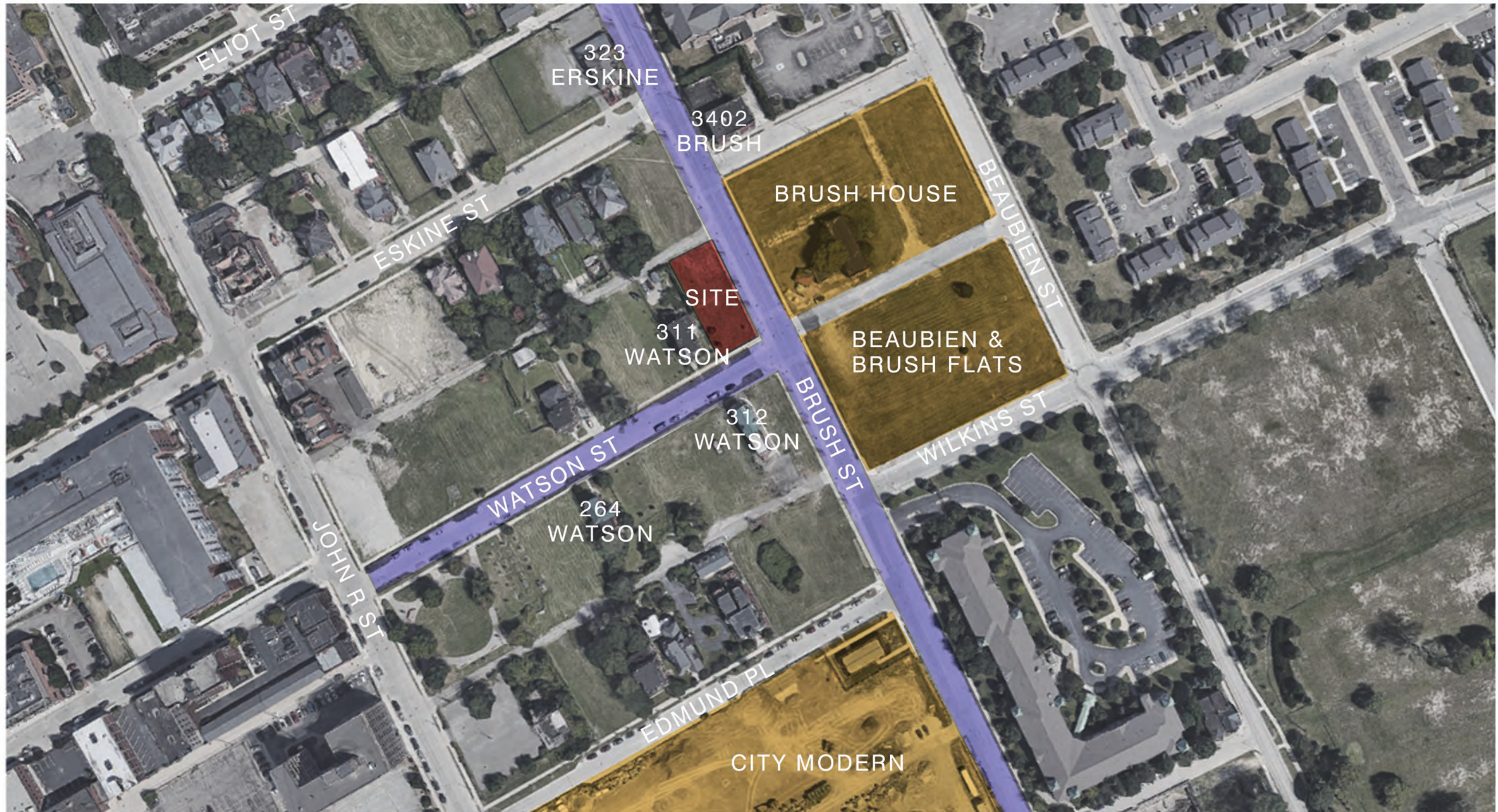


LEGEND:

- SITE
- KEY ROADWAY
- PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT







LEGEND:

- SITE
- KEY ROADWAY
- PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT







BRUSH STREET LOOKING TOWARDS EDMUND PLACE LOT



BRUSH STREET LOOKING TOWARDS SITE



BRUSH STREET LOOKING TOWARDS ERSKINE STREET LOT



KEY MAP







BRUSH STREET LOOKING TOWARDS BRUSH HOUSE SITE



BRUSH STREET LOOKING TOWARDS BRUSH FLATS SITE



BRUSH STREET LOOKING TOWARDS VILLAGE BRUSH PARK MANOR



KEY MAP





EXISTING ALLEY ON SITE



VIEW TOWARDS SITE FROM BRUSH STREET



VIEW TOWARDS SITE FROM SIDEWALK



VIEW TOWARDS SITE FROM CORNER OF WATSON & BRUSH STREET





264 WATSON STREET



311 WATSON STREET



312 WATSON STREET



205 ALFRED STREET



EDMUND PLACE HISTORIC HOMES

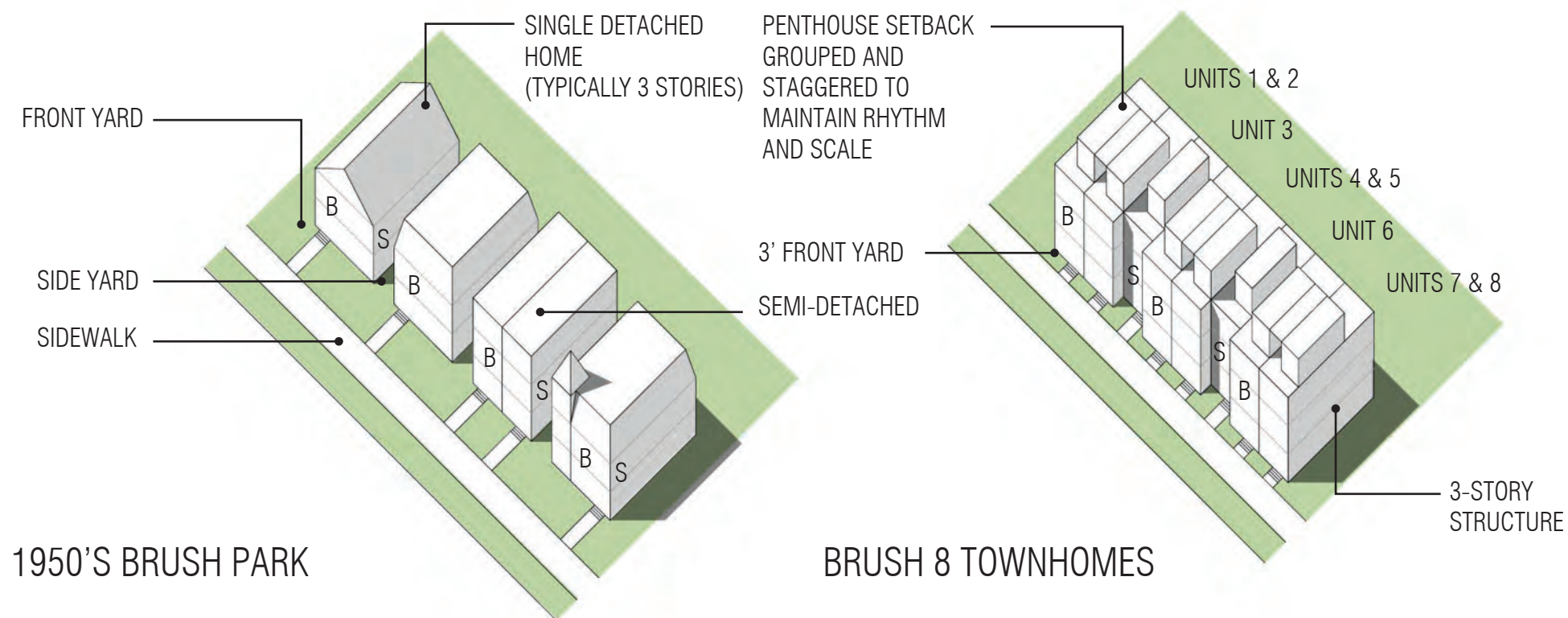


3402 BRUSH STREET





GOAL:  
TO CREATE A MASSING SCALE AND RHYTHM ALONG THE  
STREET THAT REFLECTS THE APPEAL OF THE MID 1900 BRUSH  
PARK.



1950'S BRUSH PARK

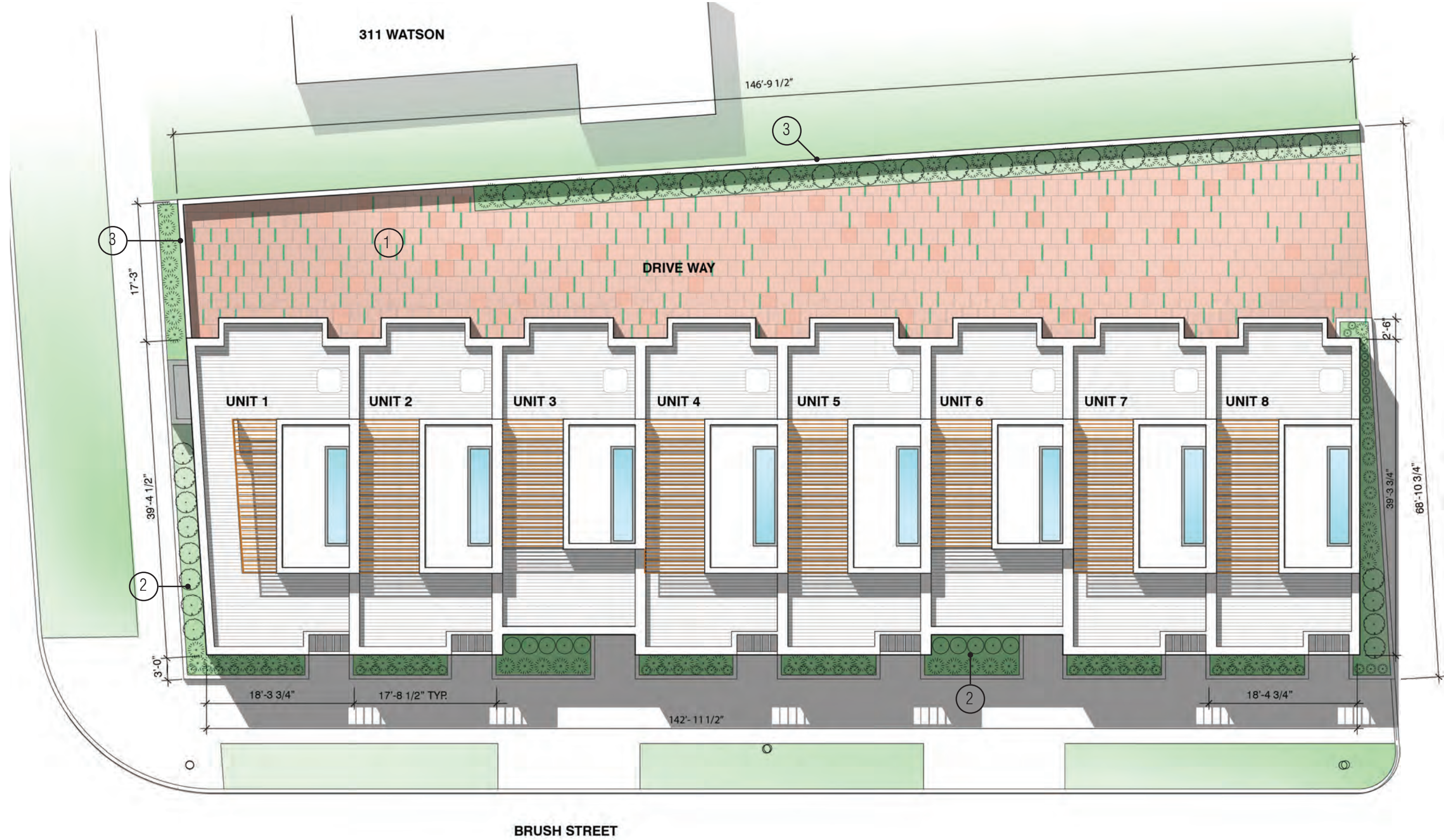
BRUSH 8 TOWNHOMES





BIRDS EYE RENDERING





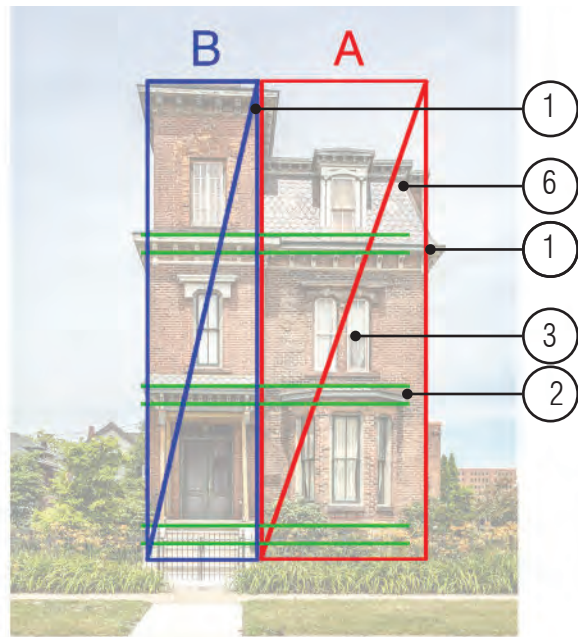
ARCHITECTURAL SITE PLAN  
SCALE: 3/16" = 1'-0"

PLAN NOTES:

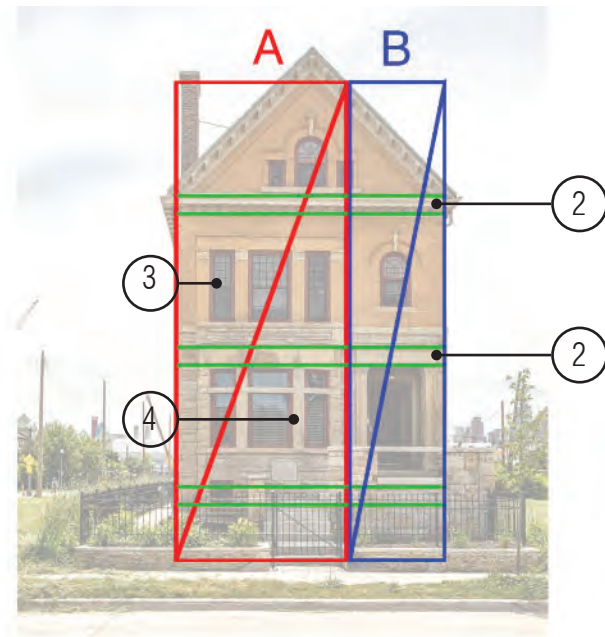
1. PERVIOUS PAVER SYSTEM TO ALLOW FOR GROWTH OF GRASS
2. 3' LANDSCAPE BUFFER BETWEEN SIDEWALK & UNIT, SETBACK FROM PROPERTY LINE
3. PROPERTY WALL/FENCE W/ LANDSCAPING



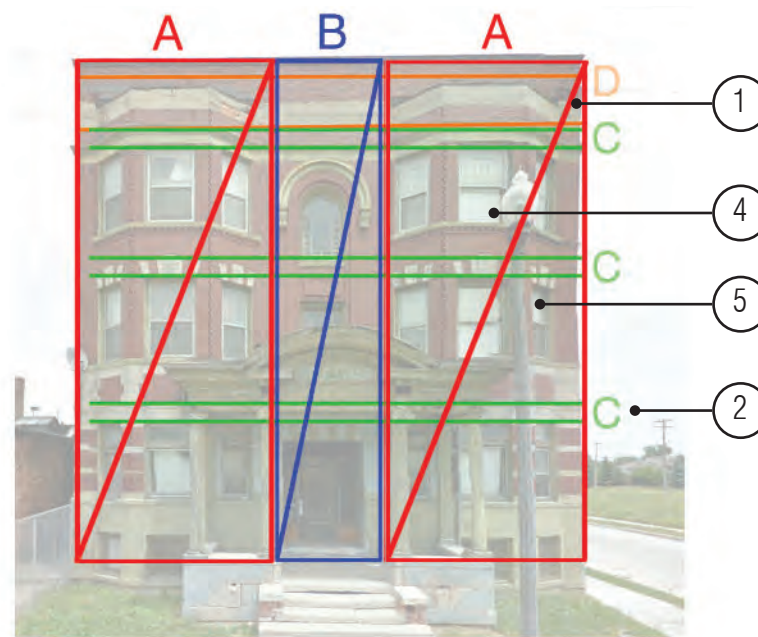




311 WATSON



312 WATSON

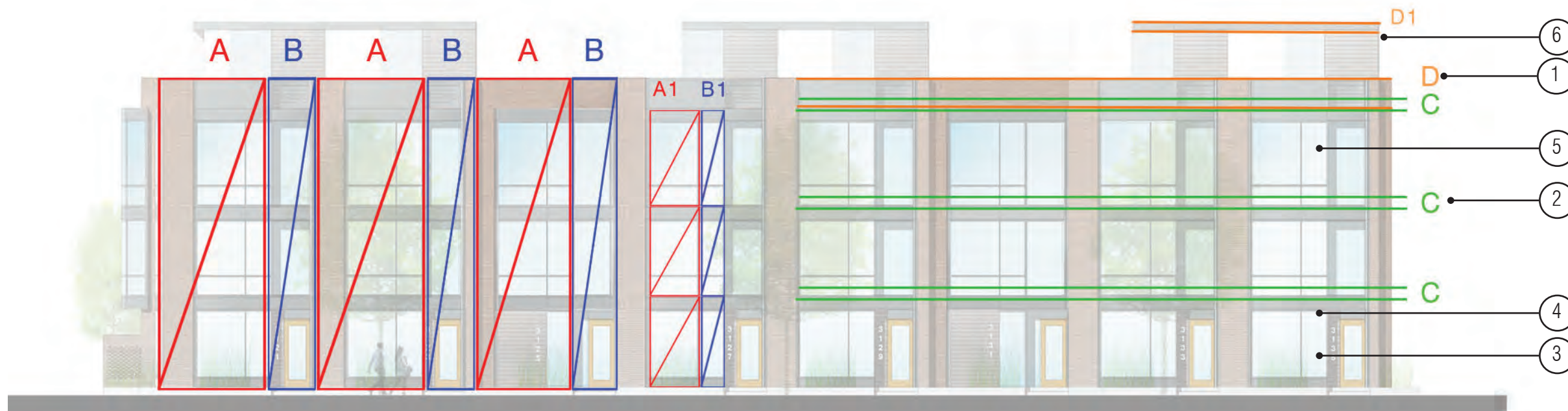


3402 BRUSH

ELEVATION NOTES:

1. HEAVY TOP/CORNICE
2. BAND/BELT COURSE  
ARTICULATING FLOOR
3. RATIO OF WIDTH TO HEIGHT OF  
WINDOW APPROX. 1:3
4. RATIO OF PICTURE WINDOW  
APPROX. 2:3
5. BAY WINDOW
6. ATTIC/PENTHOUSE

PROPORTION A = 1:3  
PROPORTION B = 1:6



BRUSH 8 TOWNHOMES





BRUSH STREET ELEVATION

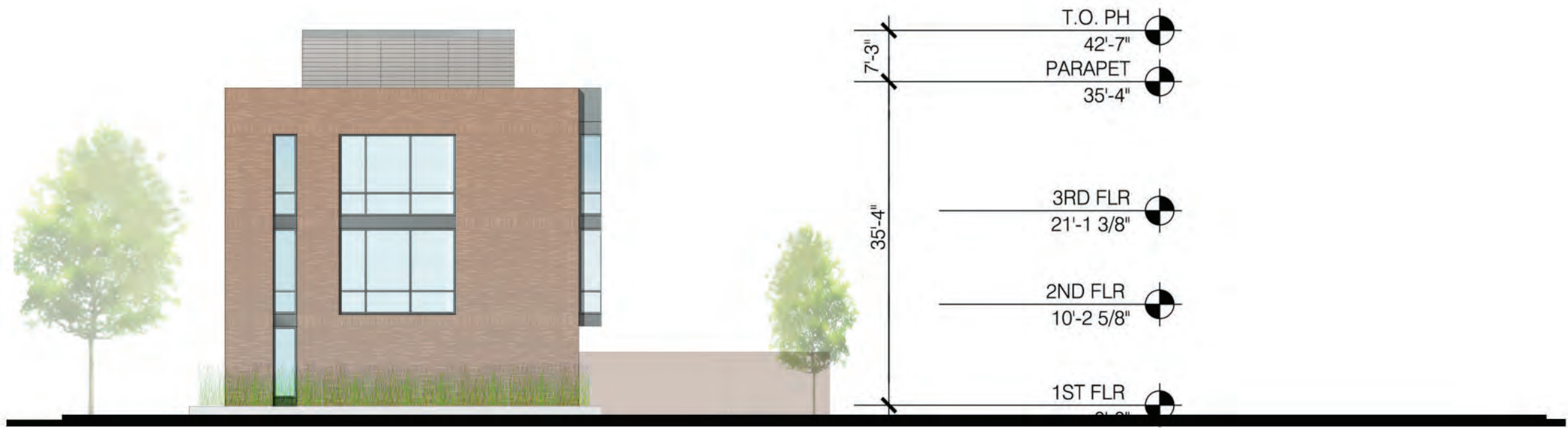


WATSON STREET ELEVATION





DRIVEWAY ELEVATION



ALLEY-SIDE ELEVATION

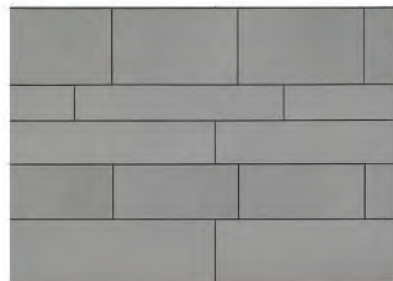




ENLARGED ELEVATION - BRUSH STREET



1. TRELLIS



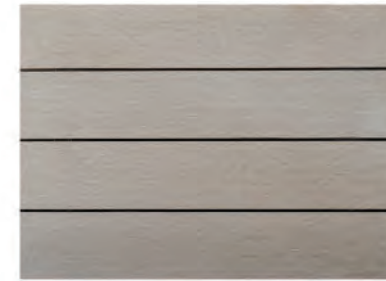
2. FIBER CEMENT



3. IRONSPOT BRICK



4. WINDOW WALL



5. COMPOSTE WOOD





ENLARGED ELEVATION - WATSON STREET



1. TRELLIS



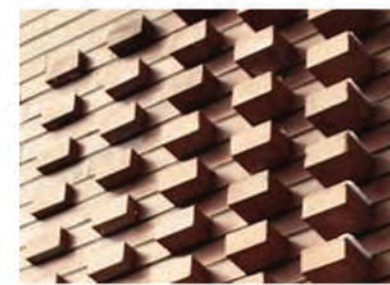
2. FIBER CEMENT



3. IRONSPOT BRICK

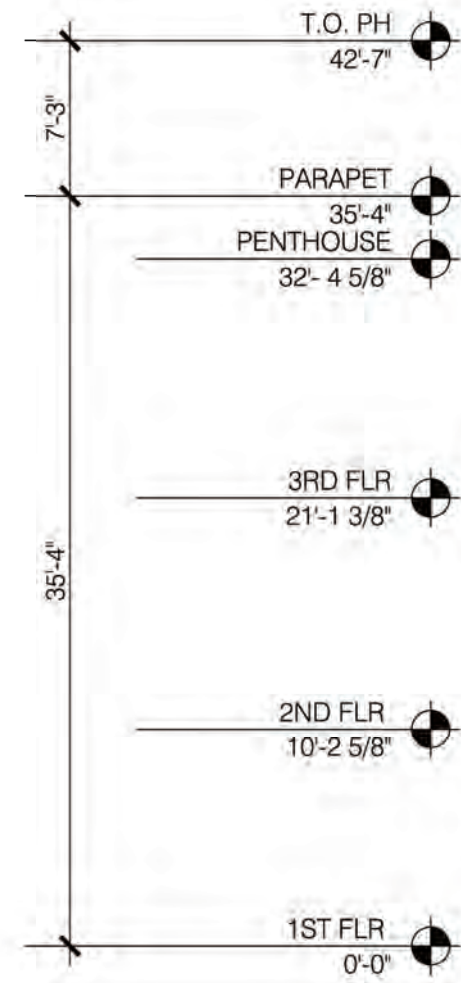
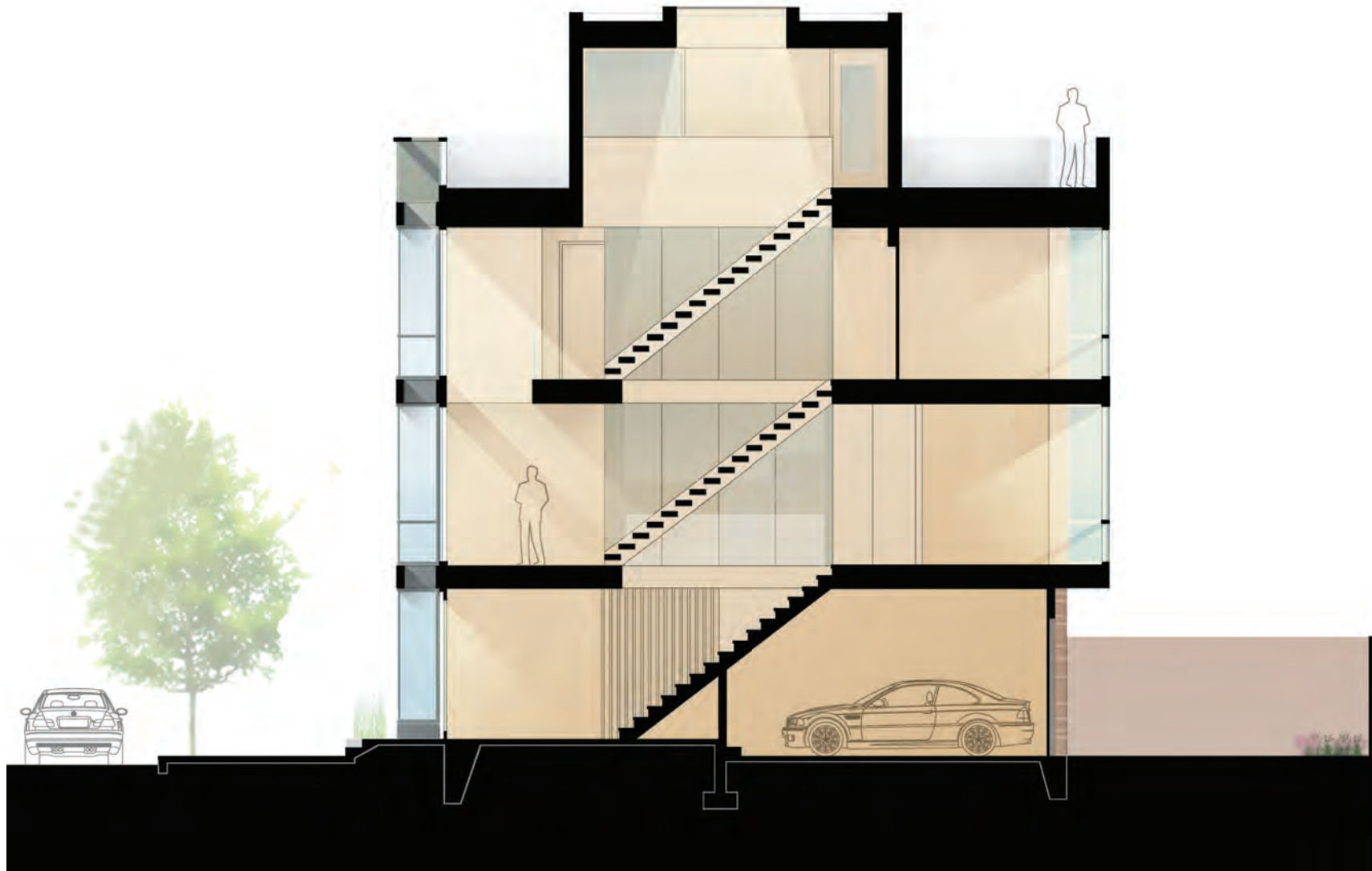


4. WINDOW WALL

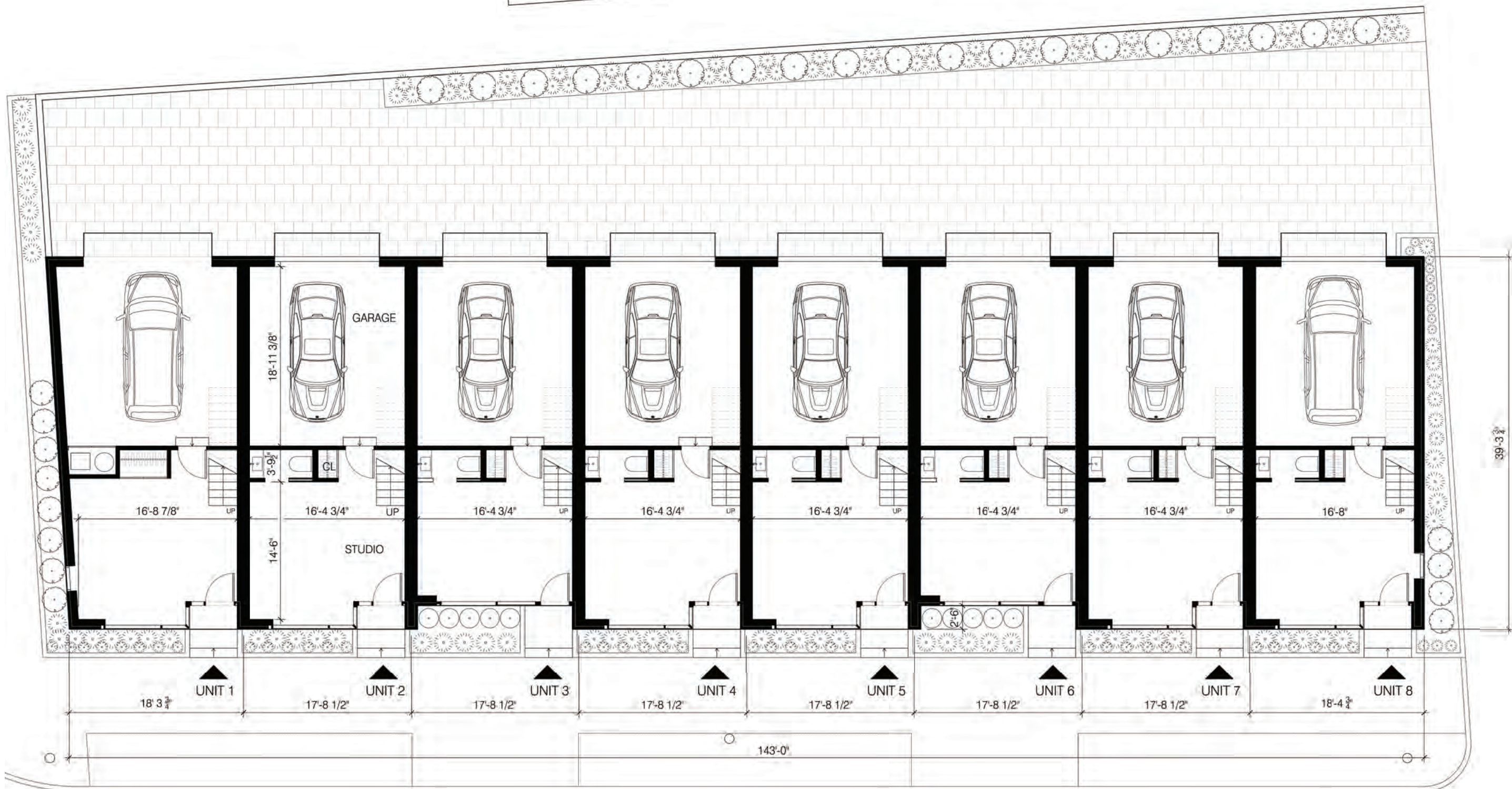


5. ORNAMENTAL BRICK



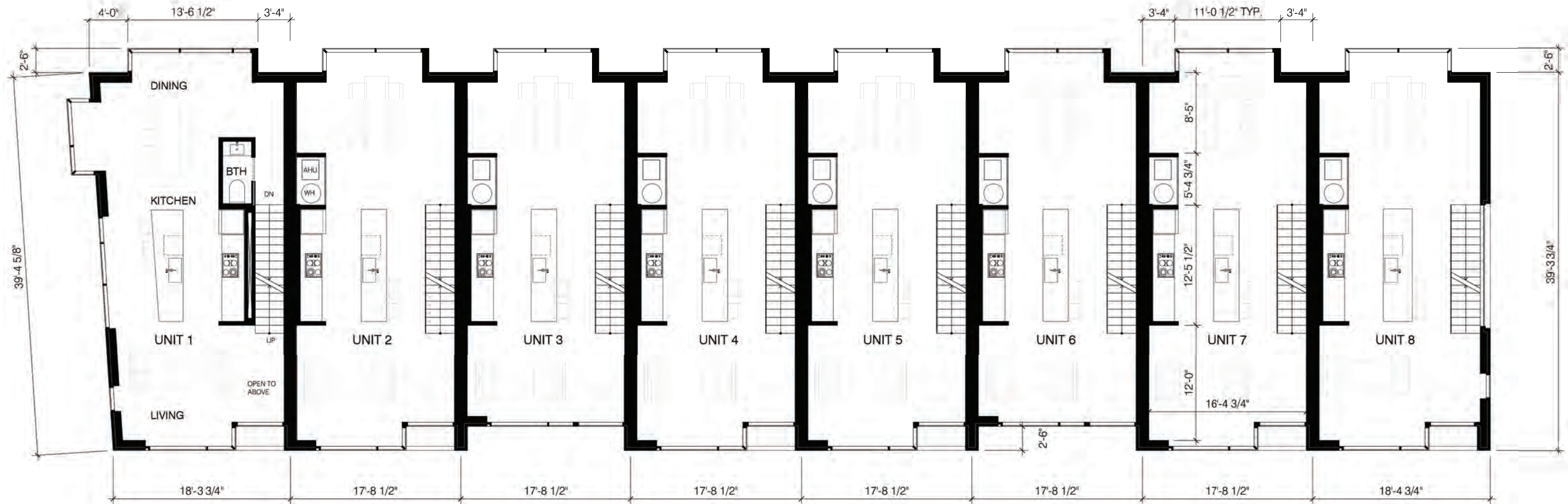






GROUND FLOOR PLAN  
SCALE: 3/16" = 1'-0"





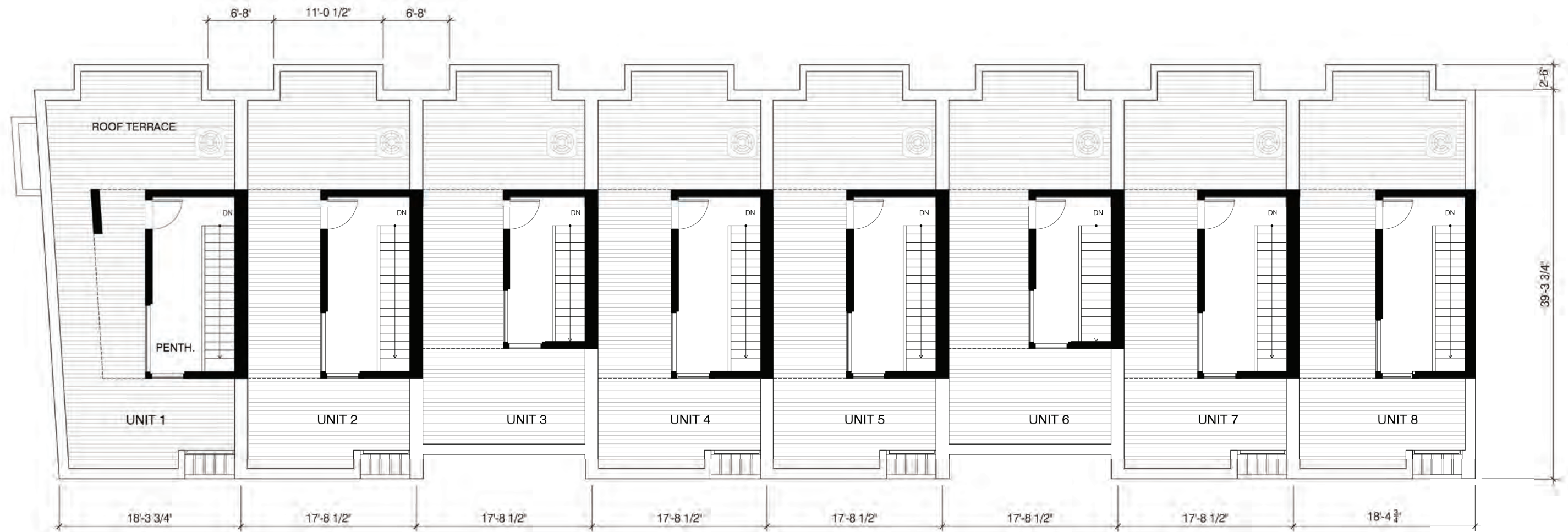
SECOND FLOOR PLAN  
SCALE: 3/16" = 1'-0"





THIRD FLOOR PLAN  
SCALE: 3/16" = 1'-0"





PENTHOUSE FLOOR PLAN  
SCALE: 3/16" = 1'-0"